Rescue Hook and Ladder Co. initiated growth of city fire department

By S. ROBERT POWELL

The first organization in Carbondale intended as a protection against fire was the Rescue Hook and Ladder Company, which was formed in 1843. The officers of the Rescue Hook and Ladder Company in 1847 were: George Love, foreman; John Lewis, assistant foreman. There were 20 members on the roll. The great fire of September 28, 1850, awakened the community to the need for effective protection against fires, and four other companies were formed: Neptune Fire Company (First Ward), Eagle Fire Company (Second Ward), Rescue Fire Company (Third Ward), and Good Will Fire Company (Fourth Ward).

The officers of the Neptune Fire Company were: G. Love, captain; G.H. Wentz, assistant captain; Lewis Pughe, treasurer; James Ruthven, secretary. The officers of the Rescue Fire Company were: David Prendergast, foreman; G.F. Fordham, first assistant; Alonzo Eaton, second assistant; Reuselear David, secretary; S.K. Waldron, treasurer. The Neptune Fire Company was disbanded on June 28, 1854.

When present-day City Hall was being built in 1892-1894, a large quantity of documents relating to the early history of Carbondale were located in the vaults of City Hall. Many of those documents were published in the pages of "The Carbondale Leader." From one such document that was reprinted in the "Leader" on May 19, 1893 (page 4), we learn the names of the officers and members of the Eagle Fire Company: James E. White, foreman; John McKillip, first assistant; S.T. Corby, second assistant; W.R. Baker, secretary; A.L. Hunt, treasurer.

The following residents of Carbondale's Second Ward were members of the Eagle Fire Company: James E. White, John McKillip, S.T. Corby, A.L. Hunt, W.R. Baker, Charles Hagan, Thomas Loftus, Michael Roach, Alexander La Grander, H. La Fount, Michael Hagan, James Herbert, John Jenkins, Thomas Mathews, John W. Hughes, John O'Grady, Duncan Cameron, Washington Burr, E.G. Root, P.C. Gritman, William Watkins, I.N. Jackson, Alex McLaren, Adam Bryden, John Rafter, George W. Reynolds, Daniel Prendergast, William Miller, Robert Eaton Sr., Oscar Oram, John Aitken Jr., George F. Perkins, C. Harrison, G.W. Griswold, John McFaalane, Phillips Wilson, Frank Robinson, William Moonie, Andrew Simpson, James Turner, Joseph Gillespie, Orlando Judwin, Thomas Voyle, John Case, Frank Durfee, William Bryden, James Gerond, Cornelius Judwin and Francis Miller.

Similarly, we learn the names of the officers and members of the Good Will Fire Company from one of the documents that was discovered in the vaults when the present City Hall was being erected, and published in the "Leader" on May 22, 1893 (page 2). The officers of this fire company were: Michael Flynn, foreman; Bernard MacTighe, assistant foreman; Peter Dockerly, treasurer. Thomas Farrell, secretary.

P. A. Rivenburg, Foreman of the Mitchell Hose Company in 1893.

The following residents of Carbondale's Fourth Ward were members of the Good Will Fire Company: Isaac Wolfe, William Hunter, Owen Loftus, James O'Donnell, Patrick O'Donnell, Michael Jordan, Michael McCann, Patrick White, Thomas Murray, Patrick Kerins, Patrick Murray, Thomas Farrell Jr., Patrick Doherty, Michale Munley, William Walker Jr., John Farrell, Edward Gordon, Peter Grimes, Michael Serdiville, Patrick Mullowny, Michael Murphy, John Nolan, Thomas Coogan, Patrick Menlon, Patrick Walsh, James Coggil, Peter Duffy, James Geraghty, Patrick Duffy, John Duffy, Martin Nolan, John McAndrew, Patrick Healey, Michael Loftus, Timothy Mc-Dermot, Patrick Barrett, John Boyle, Lawrence Nally, Edward Hughes, James Henehan, Martin McAndrews, Thomas Stanlon, Dudley Gordon, Patrick Ferguson, Andrew Farrell, Daniel Farrell, James McDonough, Anthony Clifford, Martin Lynch, John Finegan, Thomas Gordon, Thomas Nolan and William Brennan.

William P. Peel, Foreman of the Columbia Hose Company in 1893.

The Neptune, Eagle, Rescue and Good Will Fire Companies were each provided with a small engine, built at the Delaware & Hudson shops in Carbondale. These four companies operated for some time, but failed to receive proper support from the city authorities and were disbanded, their engines being returned to the Delaware & Hudson.

On July 10, 1855, the "Button's Piano" pattern fire engine that was ordered by the city's authorities arrived in Carbondale, the day being made a gala occasion. In 1893, this engine was owned by the Columbia Hose Company.

Abe L. Sahm, Treasurer of the Columbia Hose Company in 1893.

In 1857, the Columbia Hose Company was organized, with 96 men on the roll. The officers of the company at that time were: David Prendergast, foreman; Richard Howarth, first assistant foreman; Charles B. Campbell, second assistant foreman.

On May 10, 1893, Carbondale's Fire Chief P.F. Moffitt, and Colmbia's President, B.A. Kelly, laid the corner stone of the three-story brick Columbia Hose Company building that stood between City Hall and the former Miners' and Mechanics' Bank. From an article, entitled "Columbia's Celebration," that was published in "The Carbondale Leader" on Thursday, May 11, 1893 (page 4), we learn that Alderman Samuel Sheldon Jones gave a short address before the corner stone was laid and that the exercises were of an appropriate but simple nature.

From that same article we learn that "After a selection by the Germania band and the members and a large number of the spectators adjourned to the meeting rooms of the company in the old building where president Kelly made some very happy remarks in which he touched upon the splendid work that had been done by the company; the kind treatment and appreciative support they had received from the public and the city councils, and concluded with a brilliant peroration on the beautiful home in which they would soon be installed. He was greeted by a storm of applause at the conclusion of his admirable address and the assembly soon after dispersed."

The following articles were placed in the corner stone of the new Columbia Hose Company building: (1) copy of the "Leader" of May 10, 1893; (2) copy of the "Herald" of May 10, 1893; (3) old coins from J.F. Brown and J.F. Maxwell; (4) copy of the bylaws and constitutions of Columbia 5, with a list of officers and members of the company, and of the Andrew Mitchell Company, No. 1; (5) photographs of Chief Moffitt and presidents and foremen of the Columbia and Mitchell Hose Companies; (6) badge of a member of Columbia 5; (7) photographs of drivers and teams of both companies and pictures of the city churches and several prominent buildings, taken from the advance sheets of the "Leader's" Anniversary Edition of May 18, 1893.

When the building was completed, the Columbia Hose Company's apparatus, consisting of one of the finest Gleason & Bailey hose wagons decorated in white an gold and equipped with scaling ladders and fire extinguishers, was housed on the first floor. The stables for the company's handsome team of black horses, Fan and Flora, were located at the rear of the building. The second floor of the building was devoted to the company's parlors and sleeping rooms.

P. F. Moffitt, Chief of Carbondale Fire Department in 1893.

The officers of the Columbia Hose Company in 1893 were the following: B.A. Kelly, president; John Moffitt, secretary; A.L. Sahm, treasurer; William Peel, foreman; Frank Blair, assistant foreman.

The members of the Columbia Hose Company in 1893 were the following: James McLaughlane, A.F. Cook, George Gilbert, Peter Coyle, Charles Rupert, Julius Kinback, Frank Tappan, John Lavin, W. Briggs, A. McNeill, P.J. Powderly, Charles Blair, J.W. James, R.W. Blair, Owen Reese, William Ulmer, Edward Neary, John Booth, John Loftus, John Boylan, John McNulty, Charles Smith, R. Kirwin, Harry Booth, C. Hall, John Brennan, Matthew Harte, J.M. Nealon, J.R. Sitterly, P.J. Duffy, J.J. Thomas, J.W. Kilpatrick, P.F. Moffitt, P.H. Murray, Patrick Morau, James F. Boylan, Albert Jones, Thomas Finnerty, John McDonald, James F. Farrell, J.E. Brown, Thomas Brennan, James J. Loftus, John Nealon, James Gorman, John Cameron, T.G. Coughlin, James F. Maxwell, Charles Morris, James H. Campbell, Martin Neary, James Clark, John Coogan, A.F. Loftus, J. Missett, T.F. Carroll, Michael Neary, J. O'Connor, Chris Moulter and Julius Spaeth.